1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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CHAPTER III

THE FAMILY AND KINSHIP STRUCTURE

The Immediate Families of Orientation and Procreation

594 It seems unnecessary to say that the elementary family is found among the Murngin.[1] However, some of the earlier writers on aboriginal life stated that the general family system as known in other continental areas did not occur among the Australians, leaving an erroneous impression which still holds among many modern thinkers on primitive Australia. The elementary families of orientation and procreation are present and form the nuclear elements around which the larger kinship organization is built. The families of orientation and procreation are fundamental integrating factors in the social personality of the kinship ego. He is born into the first and orientated by it to the kinship organization of his own tribe and to the neighboring tribes. His filial relations to his father place him in his patrilineal clan and moiety and in a marrying relation with his mother's clan and moiety. The simple reciprocal[2] of the son and father ties him by a set of organized attitudes and behaviors to one-half the tribe and, more immediately, to his clan. The direct mother-son reciprocal is the foundation on which is built his entire set of relations by affinity, since it is the mother's brother's daughter who becomes the son's wife.

594 835 The underlying basis of the Murngin families of orientation and procreation is the incest taboo; no one within the two elementary families can have sexual relations with any other member of the two

[1] The family of orientation is the immediate family into which ego (a man or woman) is born; in its upper generation it includes the father and mother and in its lower ego's brothers and sisters. The primary function of the family of orientation from the point of view of ego is to socialize his organism and orientate it to the general community. When ego marries and has children, he establishes his family of procreation where his functions are reversed, since he is now in the position of helping in the creation of new organisms and in their socialization. All normal men and women in Murngin society, as well as other societies, live in these two families. Too frequently, when kinship systems are examined these two families are considered not as separate but as one; and since all kinship structures are based on the position of ego, this has served to confuse many expositions of kinship structure.

[2] See Glossary of Technical Terms.

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groups (except, of course, ego's father with ego's mother and ego with his wife). The membership of each family is the same as in Euro-American families and includes the same members as found here, the only difference being that a man can have a number of wives, which means in Murngin society that the children have a number of mothers. The sister is not only sexually taboo to her brothers, but any direct contact with her is also taboo. The incest idea is enlarged upon to include these additional restrictions in the general behavior of the opposite sexes of one generation within the family. This extreme form of the incest taboo in the total behavior of brothers and sisters, expressed overtly in concrete negative acts (avoidance), contributes to the organization of the family of orientation. The avoidance rules become concrete symbols of the underlying rule of incest which forces marriage outside the family of orientation and thereby creates the family of procreation out of extra-familial personalities.

The father-son reciprocal is the solid bond around which ego's spiritual affiliations are organized, since by a mystical experience of his father he leaves the totem well as a tiny fish and is directed by his male parent into his mother's womb. The father's mystical experience is the expression of the creation of the family of procreation. It is in fact the first element in the filio-parental relationship, since it is the first moment when either parent is supposed to know the beginning of this new generation within his own family. The annunciation of the child to the father by a dream symbolizes the parents' sexual intercourse, and in Murngin thought both dream and intercourse are necessary for conception and birth.

This first spiritual bond built on the father-son reciprocal determines the child's place in the totemic ceremonies which are of major import in his adult life: his whole spiritual identity, including his totem and power names; his sacred well where his soul will return after death; and the dogma and ritual which surround all these spiritual entities. So much for the orientating relations of ego's generation and that of his parents. Within his own generation and his family of orientation his brothers and sisters are to be found. His brothers and he occupy an identical place within the social structure. They are in the same patrilineal line as he and enjoy the same solidarity with the father as he, the primary differentiating factor being the distinction between older and younger brothers, as expressed in the kinship terminology. The brothers are spiritually almost identical, since they have the same

[423] of his mother, which is known by a distinctive term, *yindi-*
[614] *pulo*, (*yindi*, big). The mother's clan stands in a special
602 relationship, and a man regards its members as his own people. In times of trouble or feud, or during the quarrels about women which rage intermittently, he can be assured of sanctuary there. (*Yindipulo* applies to the mother's clan itself, and to members of the clan collectively.) They take his part in fights and he exercises hunting rights over their
[604] territory as if he belonged to the clan. A special relationship exists between a man and his mother's brother, called *kauwäl* (reciprocal term *wäkku*), who is a member of the mother's clan. This man is regarded as "like a mother" and he remains a special friend and ally throughout life.

● 594 614 In Arnhem Land the most important unit of social life is the family, the group which consists of a man, his wife or wives and their children. The family unit however lies outside the clan organisation, for the clan is a group whose members are either bound by ties of kinship and the bond of descent from a common totemic ancestor or by a belief that they share this bond, and they are
614 621 also linked by the possession of totems in common. And since the people are patrilineal and the clan group is *exogamous*[11]—that is, a man may not marry a woman of the same clan—the group which actually *occupies* the clan territory is made up of the male members of the clan and their children, *plus* their wives (who remain members of other clans—the clans into which they were born), and *minus* those female members of the clan who have married into other clans. To this occupational group the name "horde" is applied. The clan is an hereditary
[597] group, entry into which is by birth alone, but a person may enter a horde by marriage or by adoption. The *clan* is a permanent and stable unit of social organisation; the

[11] See footnote 7 (page 10), on the dual division and exogamy.

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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live in the single men's camp. The brother-sister tabu, which is very strict, now comes into operation, and his sisters as well as his mother are prohibited from eating any of the game that he kills and which is now known by a special term, *kälŋboi*. But he still receives vegetable food from his mother and from certain other female relatives which he reciprocates with gifts of fish, honey or "sugar bag" and any other food the eating of which is not restricted by *kälŋboi* tabus. Later as he acquires status and the tabus upon the game he kills are removed or relaxed, he will make regular reciprocal gifts of animal food to his *ŋandi* and to the other female relatives upon whom, prior to his marriage, he was dependent for vegetable food.

The division of labour is well-marked. The chief task of the woman, besides the bearing of children, is the collection and preparation of vegetable food and of shellfish, as well as such small game as rats, bandicoots, opossums and *kuku*, "sugar bag", the honey of the small black native bee (*Trigona* spp.), as she may glean by the way. Each woman works for her own family group—her husband and children—but some of the food that she obtains may also be sent to relatives to whom she has obligations defined by kinship. Others again may be prohibited from partaking of this food because of their kinship or other status at certain stages of their own or the woman's relationship to the society. Most of the food obtained by a woman during menstruation is tabu to certain relatives—particularly to her brothers. Contrary to the general idea the main food supply among aborigines, except at certain restricted seasons of the year, is not animal, but vegetable, and in Arnhem Land upwards of sixty food plants are known. Some of these are local and are obtained more or less casually and in small quantity. But a comparatively small number, which